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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6551
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC//DDI/OEA//
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7076
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 7137
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; December 23, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo

"If Companies Do Well, Labor Unions Also Gain;" Unionists Who Have Disaffiliated Themselves from the Militant Korean Confederation of Trade Unions are Now on the Frontline of Sales for Companies

JoongAng Ilbo, Hankook Ilbo, Hankyoreh Shinmun, All TVs

Former Vice Minister for Commerce: "Main Opposition Democratic Party Chairman-Then-Minister of Commerce-Ordered Me to Help Former CEO of Korea Express Secure Top Post at State-run Korea Coal Corp."

Dong-a Ilbo, Segye Ilbo

Education Ministry to Raise Listening Portion of Annual College Entrance English Exam to 50 Percent

Seoul Shinmun

Teacher Evaluations to Start in March

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

A senior ROKG official said yesterday that Seoul will consult with relevant countries to resume the stalled Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear issue in early February at the latest. (JoongAng)

The ROKG's aid to North Korea is gathering speed following U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth's visit to the country from Dec. 8-10. Seoul has decided to resume aid for North Korean infants and children and to assist the North in fighting drug-resistant tuberculosis. (Dong-a)

According to the Unification Ministry, seven North Koreans who were recently found drifting south of the Northern Limit Line will return home today as they expressed their wish to do so. (All)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-N. Korea

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo carried an inside-page report quoting a senior ROKG official as saying yesterday that Seoul will consult with relevant countries to resume the stalled Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear issue in early February at the latest. He was further quoted: "(We) expect China, chair of the Six-Party Talks, to play a proactive role in this effort."

Conservative Dong-a Ilbo featured an article noting that the ROKG is stepping up efforts to aid North Korea following Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth's Dec. 8-10 visit to the country. The article cited Seoul's recent decisions to resume aid for North Korean infants and children through UN agencies and to assist the North in fighting drug-resistant tuberculosis. The article surmised that the ROKG may be aiming to take the initiative in inter-Korean relations in the event that the North returns to the Six-Party Talks.

STEPHENS